

# Best Available Copy

We claim:

1. A method for processing telephone calls, comprising the steps of:
  - detecting inbound calls;
  - placing outbound calls;
  - detecting the answering of said outbound calls;
  - selectably connecting said inbound calls and answered outbound calls to a plurality of agents;
  - generating statistics concerning said inbound calls and said outbound calls; and
  - adjusting the rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to said statistics on said inbound calls and said outbound calls.15
2. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of generating statistics comprises:
  - determining the average duration of said inbound calls; and
  - determining the average duration of said outbound calls.25
3. The method of claim 2 wherein said step of generating statistics further comprises:
  - determining the delay period between the arrival of a said inbound call and the arrival of a following said inbound call; and
  - determining the average delay period between said inbound calls.35
4. The method of claim 3 wherein said step of generating statistics further comprises:
  - determining the proportion of said outbound calls which are answered.40
5. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of generating statistics comprises generating separate statistics for each agent.
6. The method of claim 5 wherein said step of generating separate statistics comprises:
  - determining the average connection time for inbound calls for each said agent; and
  - determining the average connection time for outbound calls for each said agent.45
7. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of adjusting comprises monitoring the number of available agents and said method further comprises terminating a said outbound call in progress if a said inbound call reduces said number of available agents.
8. The method of claim 1 and further comprising:
  - allocating a first group of a plurality of telephone trunks to said inbound calls;
  - allocating a second group of a plurality of telephone trunks to said outbound calls;
  - determining the degree of usage of said first group; and
  - adjusting the size of said first group and said second group in response to said degree of usage.55
9. The method of claim 8 wherein said step of determining said degree of usage comprises:
  - determining the most significant inbound trunk;
  - determining the most significant outbound trunk; and60

- determining the number of unused trunks between said most significant inbound trunk and said most significant outbound trunk.
10. The method of claim 9 wherein said step of determining said degree of usage further comprises: comparing said number of unused trunks with a window value.
11. The method of claim 10 wherein said window value is user selectable.
- 10 12. The method of claim 10 and further comprising: calculating said window value based upon said statistics for said inbound calls.
13. The method of claim 10 wherein said step of adjusting said size of said first group and said second group comprises:
- 15 increasing the number of said telephone trunks in said first group and decreasing the number of said telephone trunks in said second group if said number of unused trunks is less than said window value; and decreasing the number of said telephone trunks in said second group and increasing the number of said telephone trunks in said first group if said number of unused trunks is greater than said window value.
- 20 25 14. The method of claim 1 and further comprising: generating statistics concerning each agent of said plurality of agents; and wherein said step of adjusting said rate of placement is responsive to said statistics concerning each agent.
- 30 35 15. The method of claim 14 wherein said step of generating statistics concerning each agent comprises: determining the average time that each agent is connected to an inbound call; and determining the average time that each agent is connected to an outbound call.
- 40 16. The method of claim 15 wherein said step of adjusting said rate of placement is responsive to whether a said agent is connected to an inbound call or an outbound call.
- 45 17. The method of claim 14 wherein said step of adjusting said rate of placement is responsive to the number of agents available.
- 50 18. The method of claim 17 and further comprising: terminating a said outbound call in progress if a said inbound call reduces said number of agents available.
- 55 19. The method of claim 1 and further comprising: measuring the ring time of each said inbound call; comparing said ring time to a desired value; and wherein said step of selectively connecting comprises connecting said inbound call to an agent only if said ring time exceeds said desired value.
- 60 20. A method for processing telephone calls, comprising the steps of:
- 55 detecting inbound calls;
- 60 placing outbound calls;
- 65 detecting the answering of said outbound calls;
- 65 selectively connecting said inbound calls and answered outbound calls to a plurality of agents; generating statistics concerning said outbound calls; adjusting the rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to said statistics; and
- 65 responding to a next inbound call in a manner determined by said statistics.
21. The method of claim 20 wherein said step of responding comprises:

- determining whether the connection of said next inbound call to an available agent will prevent a said outbound call from being quickly connected with an agent; and if so, delaying the answer of said next inbound call. 5
22. The method of claim 20 wherein said step of responding comprises:
- determining whether the connection of said next inbound call to an available agent will prevent a said outbound call from being quickly connected 10 with an agent; and if so, answering said next inbound call and placing said next inbound call on-hold.
23. The method of claim 20 wherein said step of responding comprises: 15
- determining whether the connection of said next inbound call to an available agent will prevent a said outbound call from being quickly connected with an agent; and if so, answering said next inbound call, connecting 20 said next inbound call with a said agent, and terminating a said outbound call.
24. The method of claim 20 wherein said step of responding comprises: 25
- determining whether the connection of said next inbound call to an available agent will prevent a said outbound call from being quickly connected with an agent; and if so, answering said next inbound call, and playing a message to the calling party on said next inbound 30 call.
25. The method of claim 24 and further comprising: recording any response to said message by said calling party.
26. The method of claim 24 wherein said message 35 prompts said calling party to provide a response using a telephone keypad; and wherein said method further comprises decoding said response provided by said calling party.
27. The method of claim 24 wherein said message 40 prompts said calling party to provide a response using a predetermined set of spoken words; and wherein said method further comprises decoding said response provided by said calling party.
28. The method of claim 24 wherein said message 45 prompts said calling party to provide a response including an account identifier.
29. The method of claim 28 and further comprising: decoding said response of said calling party to said message; and adding said calling party to a list of parties to be called. 50
30. The method of claim 29 and further comprising: placing a call to said calling party when an agent is available. 55
31. The method of claim 28 wherein said account identifier comprises at least one of the following: a telephone number, an account number.
32. For use with a system which accommodates inbound calls and outbound calls, a method for pacing the placement of said outbound calls, comprising the steps of: 60
- monitoring the time that a predetermined agent is connected to a call;
- determining whether said call is an inbound call or an 65 outbound call;
- if said call is an inbound call then updating the statistics for said predetermined agent for inbound calls;

if said call is an outbound call then updating the statistics for said predetermined agent for outbound calls;

5 performing the above steps for each agent of a plurality of agents;

calculating the estimated time at which each of said agents will become available, based upon said statistics and considering whether each of said agents is currently on a said inbound call or a said outbound call; and

10 placing a next outbound call at a time determined by the projected availability of at least one of said agents.

33. The method of claim 32 and further comprising

15 the steps of:

monitoring the arrival time for each said incoming call;

generating statistics concerning the rate of arrival of incoming calls; and

20 calculating the estimated time at which a next said incoming call will arrive;

wherein said next outbound call is placed only if sufficient agents are projected to be available to handle both said next incoming call and said next outbound call.

25 34. The method of claim 32 and further comprising:

monitoring the arrival time for each said incoming call;

30 placing on-hold, if an agent is not available, said inbound calls and said outbound calls which are answered;

monitoring the on-hold time of each call;

generating statistics concerning the rate of arrival of incoming calls; and

35 calculating the estimated time at which a next said incoming call will arrive;

wherein said next outbound call is placed only if sufficient agents are projected to be available to prevent said on-hold time from exceeding a predetermined time.

40 35. The method of claim 34 and further comprising:

monitoring the number of calls which are on-hold;

45 if said on-hold time of a said call exceeds a predetermined value then handling said call in accordance with a predetermined procedure.

36. The method of claim 35 wherein said step of handling is only performed for inbound calls.

37. The method of claim 35 wherein said system accomodates a plurality of campaigns and said predeter-

50 mined procedure comprises transferring said call to an agent in a campaign different from the campaign with which said call was associated.

38. The method of claim 35 wherein said predeter-

55 mined procedure comprises playing a message to the party associated with said call, said message prompting said party to provide a response including an account identifier.

39. The method of claim 32 and further comprising:

monitoring for a new inbound call; and

60 determining whether the connection of said new inbound call to a next available agent will prevent said next outbound call from being quickly connected with a said agent; and

if so, cancelling said next outbound call.

65 40. The method of claim 32 and further comprising:

monitoring for a new inbound call; and

determining whether the connection of said new inbound call to a next available agent will prevent

said next outbound call from being quickly connected with a said agent; and if so, delaying the answering of said new inbound call.

41. The method of claim 32 and further comprising: monitoring for a new inbound call; and determining whether the connection of said new inbound call to a next available agent will prevent said next outbound call from being quickly connected with a said agent; and if so, answering said new inbound call and placing said new inbound call on-hold. 10

42. The method of claim 32 and further comprising: monitoring for a new inbound call; and determining whether the connection of said new inbound call to a next available agent will prevent said next outbound call from being quickly connected with a said agent; and if so, answering said new inbound call and playing a message to the calling party on said new inbound call. 20

43. The method of claim 42 and further comprising: recording any response to said message by said calling party.

44. The method of claim 32 wherein said message prompts said calling party to provide a response including an account identifier and said method further comprises:

recording said response; and using said response to call said calling party when an agent becomes available. 30

45. The method of claim 44 wherein said account identifier comprises at least one of the following: a telephone number; and an account number. 35

46. The method of claim 44 wherein said step of using comprises:

decoding said response; and adding said calling party to a list of parties to be called. 40

47. The method of claim 44 wherein an agent listens to and transcribes said response.

48. A telephone call processing system, comprising: first means for detecting inbound calls; second means for placing outbound calls by seizing selected ones of a plurality of telephone trunks and dialing telephone numbers thereon; third means for providing status information concerning said outbound calls by monitoring signals on said selected ones of said telephone trunks; 45

a plurality of agent work stations, each said agent work station allowing an agent to converse with a connected party and to view information concerning said connected party;

switching means for selectively connecting ones of 50 said telephone trunks to ones of said agent work stations; and

control means connected to said first means, said second means, said third means, said plurality of agent work stations, and said switching means, for storing information concerning customers, for responding to said first means detecting an inbound call on an inbound trunk by causing said switch to connect said inbound truck having said inbound call to an available agent work station, and for 55 sending information to said agent work station concerning said customer on said inbound call, for causing an outbound call to be placed on a said

outbound trunk by sending a telephone number to said second means, for responding to said third means detecting that said outbound call has been answered by causing said switching means to connect said outbound trunk having said outbound call to an available agent work station, for sending information to said agent work station concerning said customer on said outbound call, for generating statistics concerning said inbound calls and said outbound calls, and for adjusting the rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to said statistics on said inbound calls and said outbound calls.

49. The system of claim 48 wherein said control means generates statistics concerning said agents, estimates the rate of future inbound calls and availability of a said agent, and causes a next outbound call to be placed if a said agent is projected to be available to be connected to said next outbound call.

20 50. The system of claim 48 wherein said control means comprises means for partitioning said plurality of trunks into inbound trunks and outbound trunks.

51. The system of claim 50 wherein said control means further comprises:

25 a host device for storing said information concerning  
said customers; and  
a system controller for receiving said information  
from said host device for use in placing said out-  
bound calls, for partitioning said plurality of  
trunks, for responding to said first means detecting  
said inbound call, for placing said outbound call,  
for responding to said third means detecting that  
said outbound call has been answered, for monitor-  
ing each agent work station for maintaining and  
updating statistics for each agent work station, and  
for calculating the estimated time; and  
30 wherein a predetermined one of said host device and  
said system controller sends said information to

40 said agent work station concerning said customer.  
52. The system of claim 51 wherein said system controller sends said information to said agent work station concerning said customer on said inbound call and said outbound call.

53. The system of claim 51 wherein:  
said system controller sends said information to said  
agent work station concerning said customer on  
said outbound call; and  
said host device send said information to said agent  
work station concerning said customer on said  
inbound call.

**54.** The system of claim 50 wherein said system controller monitors the degree of usage of said inbound trunks, and repartitions said plurality of said trunks in response to said degree of usage of said inbound trunks.

**55. An apparatus for placing and receiving telephone calls, comprising:**

first means for detecting inbound calls;  
second means for placing outbound calls;  
third means for detecting the answering of said out-  
bound calls;

fourth means for selectively connecting said inbound calls and answered outbound calls to a plurality of agents; and  
control means for generating statistics concerning

control means for generating statistics concerning said inbound calls and said outbound calls, and for adjusting the rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to said statistics on said inbound calls and said outbound calls.

56. The apparatus of claim 55 wherein said control means comprises means for determining the average duration of said inbound calls and the average duration of said outbound calls.

57. The apparatus of claim 56 wherein said control means further comprises means for determining the delay period between the arrival of a said inbound call and the arrival of a following said inbound call and means for determining the average delay period between said inbound calls. 5

58. The apparatus of claim 57 wherein said control means further comprises means for determining the proportion of said outbound calls which are answered. 10

59. An apparatus for placing and receiving telephone calls, comprising:

first means for detecting inbound calls; 15  
second means for placing outbound calls;  
third means for detecting the answering of said outbound calls;  
a plurality of agent work stations, each agent work station being associated with a corresponding 20 agent;  
fourth means for selectively connecting said inbound calls and said outbound calls to said agent work stations; and  
fifth means for generating statistics concerning said 25 inbound calls and said outbound calls, for causing said second means to place said outbound calls in response to said statistics, and responsive to said first means and to said third means for controlling said fourth means. 30

60. The apparatus of claim 59 wherein said fifth means designates a first group of a plurality of telephone trunks as inbound trunks, designates a second group of said plurality of telephone calls as outbound trunks and adjusts the rate of placement of said outbound trunks in response to the degree of usage of said 35 first group. 35

61. The apparatus of claim 60 wherein said fifth means changes the number of trunks in said first group and in said second group in response to said degree of 40 usage of said first group. 40

62. The apparatus of claim 61 wherein said fifth means also adjusts said rate of placement in response to the number of trunks in said second group. 45

63. The apparatus of claim 60 wherein said fifth means determines said degree of usage by comparing 45 said number of unused trunks in said first group to a window value.

64. The apparatus of claim 63 wherein said fifth means decreases said number of trunks in said first group if said number of unused trunks exceeds said 50 window value.

65. The apparatus of claim 63 wherein said fifth means increases said number of trunks in said first group if said number of unused trunks is less than said window value. 55

66. The apparatus of claim 59 wherein said fifth means adjusts said rate of placement by monitoring the time that a said agent is connected to a call, determining whether said call is an inbound call or an outbound call, updating statistics for said agent, predicting the time at which each said agent will become available based upon statistics for each said agent and based upon whether each said agent is handling a said inbound call or a said 60 outbound call, and placing a next said outbound call at a time determined by the predicted time at which a said agent will become available. 65

67. A method for controlling trunk allocation between inbound calls and outbound calls, comprising the steps of:

- allocating a first group of a plurality of telephone trunks to said inbound calls; allocating a second group of said plurality of telephone trunks to said outbound calls;
- 5 determining the degree of usage of a selected one of either said first group or said second group; and adjusting the size of said first group and said second group in response to said degree of usage.
68. The method of claim 67 wherein said step of determining said degree of usage comprises:
- 10 determining the most significant inbound trunk; determining the most significant outbound trunk; and determining the number of unused trunks between said most significant inbound trunk and said most significant outbound trunk.
- 15 69. The method of claim 68 wherein said step of determining said degree of usage further comprises comparing said number of unused trunks with a window value.
- 20 70. The method of claim 69 wherein said window value is user selectable.
- 25 71. The method of claim 69 and further comprising the step of calculating said window value based upon said degree of usage.
72. The method of claim 69 wherein said step of adjusting said size of said first group and said second group comprises:
- 30 increasing the number of said telephone trunks in said first group and decreasing the number of said telephone trunks in said second group if said number of unused trunks is less than said window value; and decreasing the number of said telephone trunks in said second group and increasing the number of said telephone trunks in said first group if said number of unused trunks is greater than said window value.
- 35 73. A telephone call processing system, comprising: first means for detecting inbound calls; second means for placing outbound calls by seizing selected ones of a plurality of telephone trunks and dialing telephone numbers thereon; third means for providing status information concerning said outbound calls by monitoring signals on said selected ones of said telephone trunks;
- 40 a plurality of agent workstations, each said agent workstation allowing an agent to converse with a connected party and to view information concerning said connected party;
- 45 switching means for selectively connecting ones of said telephone trunks to ones of said agent workstations; and control means connected to said first means, said second means, said third means, said plurality of agent workstations, and said switching means, for partitioning said plurality of trunks into a group of inbound trunks and a group of outbound trunks, for responding to said first means detecting an inbound call on an inbound trunk by causing said switch to connect said inbound trunk having said inbound call to an available agent workstation, for causing an outbound call to be placed on a said outbound trunk by sending a telephone number to said second means, for responding to said third means detecting that said outbound call has been answered by causing said switching means to connect said outbound trunk having said outbound call to an available agent workstation, monitoring the degree of usage of a selected one of either said group of said inbound trunks or said group of said outbound trunks, and repartitioning said plurality of said trunks in response to said degree of usage.

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- 74.
- A method for processing telephone calls, comprising the steps of:  
assigning some agents of a plurality of agents to outbound calls;  
assigning other agents of said plurality of agents to inbound calls;  
detecting said inbound calls;  
5           placing said outbound calls at a rate of placement;  
             detecting the answering of said outbound calls;  
             selectably connecting answered outbound calls to said agents assigned to outbound  
             calls and inbound calls to said agents assigned to inbound calls;  
             automatically determining whether additional agents are needed for said inbound  
10      calls;  
             if additional agents are needed for said inbound calls then automatically reassigning,  
             from outbound calls to inbound calls, at least one agent of said agents assigned to outbound calls;  
             and  
             automatically adjusting said rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to  
15      said at least one agent being reassigned from outbound calls to inbound calls.
- 75.
- The method of claim 74 and further comprising the steps of:  
automatically determining whether fewer agents are needed for said inbound calls;  
if fewer agents are needed for said inbound calls then automatically reassigning,  
20      from inbound calls to outbound calls, at least one agent of said agents assigned to inbound calls;  
             and  
             automatically adjusting said rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to  
             said at least one agent being reassigned from inbound calls to outbound calls.

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A method for processing telephone calls, comprising the steps of:  
assigning some agents of a plurality of agents to outbound calls;  
assigning other agents of said plurality of agents to inbound calls;  
detecting said inbound calls;  
5           placing said outbound calls at a rate of placement;  
detecting the answering of said outbound calls;  
selectably connecting answered outbound calls to said agents assigned to outbound  
calls and selected ones of said inbound calls to said agents assigned to inbound calls;  
placing the non-selected ones of said inbound calls on hold;  
10           determining the on-hold time for said inbound calls on hold;  
if said on-hold time is excessive then automatically reassigning, from outbound  
calls to inbound calls, at least one agent of said agents assigned to outbound calls; and  
automatically adjusting said rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to  
said at least one agent being reassigned from outbound calls to inbound calls.

77.

A method for processing telephone calls, comprising the steps of:  
detecting inbound calls;  
placing outbound calls;  
detecting the answering of said outbound calls;  
selectably connecting answered outbound calls and inbound calls to a plurality of  
agents;  
20           automatically determining at least one of the following values: (1) an average  
connection time for said outbound calls, and (2) a hit rate for said outbound calls; and  
if said determined value is excessive then automatically performing a predetermined  
25           one of the following: (a) allowing a next inbound call to ring for a predetermined period before  
connected said next inbound call to an agent of said plurality of agents, (b) answering a next  
inbound call and placing said next inbound call on hold, and (c) answering a next inbound call and  
conducting an interactive session with said next inbound call.

78.

An apparatus for placing and receiving telephone calls, comprising:  
first means for detecting inbound calls;  
second means for placing outbound calls;  
third means for detecting the answering of said outbound calls;  
5           a plurality of agent work stations;  
fourth means for selectively connecting said outbound calls and said inbound calls to  
said agent work stations; and  
10           fifth means: for assigning some agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to outbound calls and assigning other agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to inbound calls; for determining a rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to  
said agent work stations being assigned to outbound calls; for causing said second means to place  
15           said outbound calls in response to said rate of placement: responsive to said first means detecting  
inbound calls and said third means detecting the answering of outbound calls for controlling said  
fourth means: for determining whether additional agent work stations are needed for said inbound  
calls; and for reassigning, from outbound calls to inbound calls, at least one agent work station of  
said agent work stations assigned to outbound calls if additional agent work stations are needed for  
said inbound calls.

79.

An apparatus for placing and receiving telephone calls, comprising:  
first means for detecting inbound calls;  
second means for placing outbound calls;  
third means for detecting the answering of said outbound calls;  
a plurality of agent work stations;  
20           fourth means for selectively connecting said outbound calls and said inbound calls to  
said agent work stations and for placing selected ones of said inbound calls on hold; and  
25           fifth means: for assigning some agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to outbound calls and assigning other agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to inbound calls; for determining a rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to  
said agent work stations being assigned to outbound calls; for causing said second means to place  
30           said outbound calls in response to said rate of placement: responsive to said first means detecting  
said inbound calls and said third means detecting the answering of outbound calls for controlling said  
fourth means: for determining the on-hold time of said inbound calls on hold; and for  
reassigning, from outbound calls to inbound calls, at least one agent work station of said agent  
work stations assigned to outbound calls if said on-hold time is excessive.

80.

An apparatus for placing and receiving telephone calls, comprising:  
first means for detecting inbound calls;  
second means for placing outbound calls;  
5           third means for detecting the answering of said outbound calls;  
a plurality of agent work stations;  
fourth means for selectively connecting said outbound calls and said inbound calls to  
said agent work stations; and  
10           fifth means for assigning some agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to outbound calls and assigning other work stations of said plurality of agent work stations  
to inbound calls; for determining a rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to said  
agent work stations being assigned to outbound calls; for causing said second means to place said  
outbound calls in response to said rate of placement; responsive to said first means detecting said  
inbound calls and said third means detecting the answering of said outbound calls for controlling  
said fourth means; for determining at least one of the following values: (1) an average connection  
time for said outbound calls, and (2) a hit rate for said outbound calls; and for performing a  
predetermined one of the following if said determined value is excessive: (a) allowing a next  
inbound call to ring for a predetermined period before connecting said next inbound call to an agent  
work station, (b) answering a next inbound call and placing said next inbound call on hold, and (c)  
answering a next inbound call and conducting an interactive session with said next inbound call,

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81.

An apparatus for placing and receiving telephone calls, comprising:  
a plurality of agent work stations;  
an automatic call distributor (ACD) for detecting inbound calls, for placing  
5 outbound calls, and for selectively connecting said outbound calls and said inbound calls to said  
agent work stations;

detection means for detecting the answering of said outbound calls; and  
10 a controller: for assigning some agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to outbound calls and assigning other agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to inbound calls; for determining a rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to  
said agent work stations being assigned to outbound calls; for causing said ACD to place said  
outbound calls in response to said rate of placement; responsive to said ACD detecting said  
15 inbound calls and responsive to said detection means detecting the answering of said outbound  
calls for controlling said connecting by said ACD; for determining whether additional agent work  
stations are needed for said inbound calls, and for reassigning, from outbound calls to inbound  
calls, at least one agent work station of said agent work stations assigned to outbound calls if  
additional agent work stations are needed for said inbound calls,

82.

An apparatus for placing and receiving telephone calls, comprising:

a plurality of agent work stations;

an automatic call distributor (ACD) for detecting inbound calls, for placing  
20 outbound calls, for detecting the answering of said outbound calls, and for selectively connecting  
said outbound calls and said inbound calls to said agent work stations; and

a controller: for assigning some agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
25 stations to outbound calls and assigning other agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to inbound calls; for determining a rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to  
said agent work stations being assigned to outbound calls; for causing said ACD to place said  
outbound calls in response to said rate of placement; responsive to said ACD detecting said  
inbound calls and detecting the answering of said outbound calls for controlling said connecting by  
30 said ACD; for determining whether additional agent work stations are needed for said inbound  
calls; and for reassigning, from outbound calls to inbound calls, at least one agent work station of  
said agent work stations assigned to outbound calls if additional agent work stations are needed for  
said inbound calls,

83.

An apparatus for placing and receiving telephone calls, comprising:

a plurality of agent work stations;

an automatic call distributor (ACD) for detecting inbound calls, for placing  
outbound calls, and for selectively connecting said outbound calls and said inbound calls to said  
5 agent work stations;

detection means for detecting the answering of said outbound calls; and

a controller for assigning some agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to outbound calls and assigning other work stations of said plurality of agent work stations  
to inbound calls; for determining a rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to said  
10 agent work stations being assigned to outbound calls; for causing said ACD to place said outbound  
calls in response to said rate of placement; responsive to said detection means detecting the  
answering of said outbound calls for causing said ACD to connect an answered outbound call to an  
agent work station assigned to outbound calls; for determining whether additional agent work  
stations are needed for said inbound calls; and for reassigning, from outbound calls to inbound  
calls, at least one agent work station of said agent work stations assigned to outbound calls if  
additional agent work stations are needed for said inbound calls.

84.

An apparatus for placing and receiving telephone calls, comprising:

a plurality of agent work stations;

an automatic call distributor (ACD) for detecting inbound calls, for placing  
outbound calls, for detecting the answering of said outbound calls, and for selectively connecting  
said outbound calls and said inbound calls to said agent work stations; and

a controller: for assigning some agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to outbound calls and assigning other agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
25 stations to inbound calls; for determining a rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to  
said agent work stations being assigned to outbound calls; for causing said ACD to place said  
outbound calls in response to said rate of placement; responsive to said ACD detecting the  
answering of said outbound calls for causing said ACD to connect an answered outbound call to an  
agent work station assigned to outbound calls; for determining whether additional agent work  
30 stations are needed for said inbound calls; and for reassigning, from outbound calls to inbound  
calls, at least one agent work station of said agent work stations assigned to outbound calls if  
additional agent work stations are needed for said inbound calls.

85. An apparatus for placing and receiving telephone calls, comprising:  
a plurality of agent work stations;  
an automatic call distributor (ACD) for detecting inbound calls, for placing  
outbound calls, and for selectively connecting said outbound calls and said inbound calls to said  
5 agent work stations;  
detection means for detecting the answering of said outbound calls; and  
a controller for assigning some agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to outbound calls and assigning other work stations of said plurality of agent work stations  
to inbound calls; for determining a rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to said  
10 agent work stations being assigned to outbound calls; for causing said ACD to place said outbound  
calls in response to said rate of placement responsive to said ACD detecting said inbound calls and  
responsive to said detection means detecting the answering of said outbound calls for controlling  
said connecting by said ACD; for determining at least one of the following values: (1) an average  
connection time for said outbound calls, and (2) a hit rate for said outbound calls; and for  
15 performing a predetermined one of the following if said determined value is excessive: (a) allowing  
a next inbound call to ring for a predetermined period before connecting said next inbound call to  
an agent work station. (b) answering a next inbound call and placing said next inbound call on  
hold, and (c) answering a next inbound call and conducting an interactive session with said next  
inbound call.

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86. An apparatus for placing and receiving telephone calls, comprising:

a plurality of agent work stations;

an automatic call distributor (ACD) for detecting inbound calls, for placing  
outbound calls, for detecting the answering of said outbound calls, and for selectively connecting  
5 said outbound calls and said inbound calls to said agent work stations; and

10 a controller for assigning some agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to outbound calls and assigning other work agent work stations of said plurality of agent  
work stations to inbound calls; for determining a rate of placement of said outbound calls in  
response to said agent work stations being assigned to outbound calls; for causing said ACD to  
place said outbound calls in response to said rate of placement; responsive to said ACD detecting  
said inbound calls and detecting the answering of said outbound calls for controlling said  
connecting by said ACD; for determining at least one of the following values: (1) an average  
connection time for said outbound calls, and (2) a hit rate for said outbound calls; and for  
performing a predetermined one of the following if said determined value is excessive: (a) allowing  
a next inbound call to ring for a predetermined period before connecting said next inbound call to  
an agent work station, (b) answering a next inbound call and placing said next inbound call on  
hold, and (c) answering a next inbound call and conducting an interactive session with said next  
inbound call.

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87. An apparatus for placing and receiving telephone calls, comprising:  
a plurality of agent work stations;  
a dialing means for placing outbound calls;  
detection means for detecting the answering of said outbound calls;  
5      an automatic call distributor (ACD) for detecting inbound calls, and for selectively  
connecting said outbound calls and said inbound calls to said agent work stations; and  
10     a controller: for assigning some agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to outbound calls and assigning other agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to inbound calls; for determining a rate of placement of said outbound calls in response to  
said agent work stations being assigned to outbound calls; for causing said dialing means to place  
said outbound calls in response to said rate of placement; responsive to said detection means  
detecting the answering of said outbound calls for causing said ACD to connect an answered  
outbound call to an agent work station assigned to outbound calls; for determining whether  
additional agent work stations are needed for said inbound calls; and for reassigning, from  
outbound calls to inbound calls, at least one agent work station of said agent work stations  
assigned to outbound calls if additional agent work stations are needed for said inbound calls.

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88.

An apparatus for placing and receiving telephone calls, comprising:  
a plurality of agent work stations;  
a dialing means for placing outbound calls;  
detection means for detecting the answering of said outbound calls;  
5           an automatic call distributor (ACD) for detecting inbound calls, and for selectively  
connecting said outbound calls and said inbound calls to said agent work stations; and  
10           a controller for assigning some agent work stations of said plurality of agent work  
stations to outbound calls and assigning other work agent work stations of said plurality of agent  
work stations to inbound calls; for determining a rate of placement of said outbound calls in  
response to said agent work stations being assigned to outbound calls; for causing said dialing  
means to place said outbound calls in response to said rate of placement; responsive to said  
detection means detecting the answering of said outbound calls for causing said ACD to connect an  
answered outbound call to an agent work station assigned to outbound calls; for determining at  
least one of the following values: (1) an average connection time for said outbound calls, and (2) a  
hit rate for said outbound calls; and for performing a predetermined one of the following if said  
determined value is excessive: (a) allowing a next inbound call to ring for a predetermined period  
before connecting said next inbound call to an agent work station, (b) answering a next inbound  
call and placing said next inbound call on hold, and (c) answering a next inbound call and  
conducting an interactive session with said next inbound call.

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